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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8834  
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
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RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA  
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RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 0760  
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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE HAITI EARTHQUAKE

1.SUMMARY: Japanese media outlets have extensively covered the earthquake and relief efforts in Haiti. The coverage has been factual with the exception of some comments by liberal papers. The press has expressed expectations for Japan to utilize in Haiti the expertise accumulated through its own seismic disasters. Although the Haiti catastrophe has been duly reported, it has been replaced as the top news story here by a political scandal and the bankruptcy of Japan Airlines. END SUMMARY

2.The Japanese media have covered the Haiti earthquake extensively. The reports have been factual, noting in the immediate days following the quake that although the U.S., France, China, and other nations dispatched rescue teams, the assistance was still insufficient and the transport of relief supplies and rescue teams was hampered by damaged infrastructure.

3. The newspapers reported on President Obama's pledge to help rebuild Haiti in their evening editions on the 19th. On the following two days most dailies covered the President's meeting with former presidents Clinton and Bush at which they agreed to launch a national drive to raise funds for Haiti. The reporting was fair and balanced.

4. On January 19 the liberal Asahi and Mainichi newspapers ran prominent inside-page reports on the U.S. plan to dispatch 10,000 troops to Haiti. The Asahi was sympathetic toward the U.S.: "The deployment of a large number of troops to Haiti might become an additional burden on America, which is fighting two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, because the rebuilding effort for Haiti will likely be a long-term mission."

5. However, both the Asahi and Mainichi partly saw the relief effort through the prism of geopolitics. In the same article the Asahi wrote: "The U.S. military has recently come to consider disaster relief efforts one of its important missions. Relief operations are intended to build trust with developing nations...This catastrophe in America's 'backyard' has provided a good venue for the U.S. to demonstrate its military's nonmilitary operations." And Mainichi: "The U.S. and China are exerting active 'relief diplomacy' toward

quake-stricken Haiti. The Obama administration, which seeks to improve the U.S.'s relations with Latin America, is demonstrating its presence in the region by sending a total of 10,000 troops, an aircraft carrier, and a hospital ship. China has been increasing its support for Haiti as if to compete with Taiwan, which has diplomatic relations with Haiti ....China is engaged in fierce competition with the U.S., which hopes to maintain its influence in Latin America."

¶16. The media began covering the efforts of a Japanese team that arrived in Haiti on January 17. Expectations for Japanese contributions to the relief effort run high here. A January 15 Asahi editorial noted: "Japan is urged to promptly extend aid, making use of its accumulated know-how in anti-earthquake measures and disaster relief."

¶17. COMMENT: As a country frequently wracked by disastrous earthquakes, Japan has typically been actively involved in providing relief to other nations experiencing such disasters. Although Japanese press coverage of the Haiti earthquake has been extensive, shortly after the disaster struck related stories were pushed to inside pages by reports of the scandal involving political kingpin Ichiro Ozawa and of the bankruptcy of Japan Airlines. END COMMENT

ZUMWALT